

Message Text

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ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 USIA-06 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4889

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL, DR

SUBJECT: OPERATION "SHOESTRING": SPORTS

1. AS DEPT AWARE, ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO THE COUNTRY TEAM UNDERTOOK A TWIN-PRONGED OFFENSIVE OF CULTURAL AND SPORTS EVENTS TO ALTER AND IMPROVE THE U.S. IMAGE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. UNTIL NOW, OUR PRINCIPAL EMPHASIS HAS BEEN ON THE MORE DIFFICULT, CULTURAL SIDE SINCE SPORTS ACTIVITIES ARE INDIGENOUSLY WIDESPREAD HERE. WITH THE PROSPECT OF A MAJOR CULTURAL YEAR DURING THE BICENTENNIAL (ONE, PERHAPS TWO, U.S. SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS, AN EXHIBIT OF THE WORKS OF A U.S. SCULPTOR AND THE OPENING OF A NEW QUARTER-MILLION DOLLAR BINATIONAL CENTER, INTER ALIA, PLANNED), WITHOUT THE USE OF USG FUNDS, WE BELIEVE WE ARE REACHING OUR TARGET IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EVENTS.

2. THE OTHER ARROW IN OUR QUIVER, SPORTS EVENTS, HAS BEEN AT REST UNTIL RECENTLY. OUR MAIN PROBLEM HAD BEEN THE LACK OF A PERSON WHO COULD DEDICATE FULL-TIME TO THIS VARIED FIELD. THE ARRIVAL OF TOM SEMLER ON THE LOCAL SCENE (SEMLER IS EX-PEACE CORPS DOM REP WITH A FLAIR FOR SPORTS PROMOTION) PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE EMBASSY TO ACQUIRE A "SPORTS ATTACHE", WITHOUT A SLOT OR USG FUNDS. SEVERAL MEETINGS INVOLVING THE AMBASSADOR RESULTED IN SEMLER BECOMING THE "SPORTS ADVISER" TO THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FUNDED BY THE GULF & WESTERN FOUNDATION, AND SECONDED TO THE EMBASSY

3. HAVING ACQUIRED A BODY, THE COUNTRY TEAM ADDRESSED THE QUESTION

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OF PROGRAM. WE DETERMINED OUR MAIN OBJECTIVE TO BE THAT OF INFLUENCING

THROUGH SPORTS PROGRAMS AS MANY AS POSSIBLE OF THE THOUSANDS OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO LIVE IN THE POOR NEIGHBORHOODS OF URBAN AND RURAL CENTERS AND WHOM WE DO NOT OTHERWISE REACH BUT WERE OUR ENEMIES LABOR.

MANY OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE BELONG TO NEIGHBORHOOD SPORTS CLUBS (WHICH FOR MOST IS THE MAIN SOCIAL LOCALE) AND ELECT CLUB OFFICERS, FROM AMONG THEIR PEERS. WE DECIDED TO TARGET PRINCIPALLY THESE CLUB OFFICERS, USING THE MEDIUM OF BASEBALL. SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH BASEBALL COMMISSIONER BOWIE KUHN (WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT HAS BEEN MOST VALUABLE) LED US TO EMBARK UPON A PROGRAM OF SENDING THESE CLUB OFFICERS, IN GROUPS OF THREE, AS GUESTS FOR SEVERAL DAYS OF ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE SEVENTEEN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM THAT SPRING-TRAIN IN FLORIDA. IN THIS FASHION, YOUNG PEOPLE WHO OTHERWISE WOULD BE UNABLE TO VISIT THE U.S. WILL DO SO UNDER EXCITING AUSPICES AND WILL ACQUIRE SOME KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WITH WHICH TO COUNTER THE ANTI-U.S. SWILL THAT AGITATORS IN THE POOR BARRIOS ARE PEDDLING.

4. IN ADDITION, WE SHALL BE SEEKING TO ARRANGE FOR THE PERFORMANCE HERE OF U.S. TEAMS AND INDIVIDUAL ATHLETES AS WELL AS COACHES. THE HORIZONS ARE BROAD AND THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE.

5. AS TO ASSETS, IN ADDITION TO SEMLER, THE ENTHUSIASTIC BACKING OF THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, AND THE G&W FINANCIAL SUPPORT, WE HAVE OBTAINED THE PROMISE OF THE DOMINICAN AIRLINE FOR FREE SEATS (NOT TO EXCEED THREE AT A TIME) TO MIAMI OR NEW YORK WHENEVER WE NEED THEM. THE COOPERATION OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SPORTS, CASTELLANOS, HAS BEEN EXCELLENT. WE ARE ALSO WORKING CLOSELY WITH TWO YOUNG DOMINICANS WHO ARE THE COUNTRY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL SPORTS PROMOTORS WHO OPERATE FOR A PROFIT. WE HAVE ASKED THAT A PERCENTAGE OF THEIR PROFIT FROM EVENTS THAT WE HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ARRANGING BE GIVEN TO THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SO THAT A REVOLVING FUND FOR SPORTS COULD BE ESTABLISHED. THEY HAVE OF COURSE AGREED. FURTHER, WE ARE IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH MIKE BURKE, GENERAL MANAGER OF MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, WHO IS WELL DISPOSED TO ASSIST US. THE VERY ACTIVE MICHIGAN PARTNERS GROUP IS TURNING ITS ATTENTION TO ASISTING US IN SPORTS. BOWIE KUHN WILL VISIT US IN FEBRUARY AND TOGETHER WITH MRS. KUHN WILL BE GUESTS AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE.

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6. AS TIME GOES ON, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN OBTAIN ADDITIONAL ASSETS AND DEVELOP MORE PROGRAMS. AS OF NOW, WE ARE SATISFIED THAT SOLID GROUNDWORK HAS BEEN LAID AND THAT WE ARE READY TO GO. WE SHALL KEEP THE DEPT INFORMED. THE EMBASSY REMAINS IN THE BACKGROUND WHILE THE PROGRAMS ARE PRESENTED PUBLICLY UNDER DOMINICAN SPORTS SECRETARIAT-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE-GULF & WESTERN AUSPICES.

HURWITCH

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